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WIKI – 1 Assignment

***Action Research***

Action research is often a collaborative, progress driven process. Unlike theoretical or solely data research where the problem is yet to be identified and understood, action research inquiry concentrates on a specific, real-like problem and leads toward a plausible solution. This type of process involves a collaborative input from everyone involved, facilitates discussion and further education in order to improve on the current practices.

The importance of action research exists in the personalized approach to the identified problem. The educator involved in this process observes, questions and evaluates his or her everyday practices, students’ progress and the adjustments needed for improvement. General studies are often applied to such broad or vague issue that they may not be entirely applied to every classroom. Using a personal approach the teacher is able to address current real-life problems and reflect on their everyday experiences.

Finally, one the main difference of action approach compared to other types is that the research incorporates an intervention or a possible solution to the problem posed. After applying the intervention, the educator can evaluate the changes that have occurred and the success of such intervention through observation within the natural environment.

***The Problem***

One of the problems I would like to concentrate on is **the way students learn (or are taught) according to gender**. There is a very old stereotype that boys do better in math and girls do better with literacy. The perception of girls and boys learning differently does frequently, however subconsciously, spill over into educator’s everyday teaching style. I have witnessed math classes being male-centric in participation and literacy classes where girls were more active than boys.

Unfortunately, the initiation of this unequal participation often comes from the teacher. Calling on students of one gender more than another may be an unintentional action but it does affect the learning opportunities of all students. Teachers are in need of additional training on how to work with students of both genders to provide them with individual teaching styles as well as equal opportunities to learn and express themselves in mathematics and literacy.

***Is it Researchable?***

This topic has been studied at length. Although many studies originated a couple of decades ago and the teaching practices have been inclined toward gender-equal education. The issue, however, still exists either due to new scientific research about different brain function in gender or the deeply rooted perceptions and expectations of the educator. Additionally, data can be acquired from the previously collected statistics on the test results for boys and girls to determine the gender gap in results.

***Prior Research***

A number of researches shave been conducted on various elements of this topic. While gender is now believed to be mostly nurtured, the fact that children are raised and taught differently remains.

Psychologists and educators alike have researched the topics of male and female brain as well as to how boys and girls have possibly different learning style. A number of studies both in favor of this theory and debunking exist for extensive research. Michael Gurian (2006) believes that one of the differences between girls and boys learning styles is related to visual system, optical cognition and sensory or detail information.

There is also research on more narrow topics like gender gab in learning mathematics and literacy. Studying the brain, some scientists believe that perception and brain function in girls and boys in the way they process literacy is different. For example, authors of the article in Neuropsychologia journal say that girls outperform boys in language processing due to different brain activation functions (D. Burman, T. Bitan, & J. Booth, 2008.) The perception with mathematics is the opposite, putting male students at the higher learning level than females. The idea is that girls and boys use different strategies to solve mathematical problems. It is believed that boys are driven by competition and rely more on memory while girls use manipulative and time to process mathematical concepts. (B. Azar, 2010)

***Pros and Cons***

The acknowledgement of different learning styles in boys and girls can create a vessel for positive change in the teaching approach as well as biased and segregation.

It can not be overlooked that teacher’s mindset on gender differences affects their teaching styles and has a direct impact on students’ performance. Social concepts or even misconceptions applied to the students affect their confidence and ideas of their own abilities in education (A. Stetsenko et. al. 2000). When children get exposed to the idea that their gender “is not typically good in math/literacy” they can easily believe it and put just as much effort as they know is expected of them.

On the other hand, the same knowledge is a path to figuring out how to offer better education to both genders. Teaching children in a gender neutral way or specifically creating instructional techniques that helps both boys and girls learn in their own way but just as successfully can help bridge the inequality gap in academic performance. (King K., Gurian M., & Stevens K. 2010)

***Current Instructional Strategies***

I am not aware of one solid instructional strategy. Some schools may have single gender classroom, offering the same instructions to the whole class without gender differentiation. In co-ed classrooms, which are in majority in the academic world I think teaching boys and girls differently or similarly is a prerogative of the teacher in each classroom. Equal treatment is a social standard in our society at the time but there is no mandate on having specific instructional differences when it comes to gender.

***Practitioners/Theorists***

A number of practitioners and researchers seem to concentrate on one or another gender or total equality. Michael Gurian is an educator and writer has co-founded a Gurian Institute to educate regarding gender inequality in education. While he does explore both educational differences for both girls and boys, majority of his academic writing is male-centric. He and his co-writers do offer new strategies to bridge the existing gender gap in learning in classrooms. (Gurian M. & Stevens K. 2004)

***Proposed Intervention***

I believe that whether it is a biological or purely social the gender gap in academic performance is an existing problem. Teachers need to employ various instructional strategies to tap into the strengths of different learning styles of boys and girls to help them in learning, whether it is literacy or mathematics.

Adding elements that are needed to certain kids, like movement, which helps all kids snap out of the monotony of sitting down. Using a lot of visual aids and stimulation helps both boys and girls in different ways. The girls process visual aids better and it can assist them in mathematic terms while boys can apply visual strategy with literacy and writing. (King K., Gurian M., & Stevens K. 2010)

Another approach is peer-learning. Instead of segregating boys and girls, letting them work together creates a balance where they can complement each other in different areas or help look at things from different perspective.

***Define, Construct, Measure Intervention***

Creating new instructional methods to old lessons is one way to apply a change to a classroom that exhibits a problem in gender inequality. To measure the results of the intervention one can compare the test results pre and post change. This way solid numbers will provide the understanding whether the intervention of the instructional methods can help bridge the gap that exists between boys and girls in various academic subjects.

References:

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